



# News Release

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## **Mercury-limit suspension for H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine ends**

*Plenty of vaccine available for all*

**OLYMPIA** — The temporary suspension of Washington’s limit on the amount of mercury (thimerosal) allowed in H1N1 swine flu vaccines for certain people is ending. The limits were suspended last fall when supplies of mercury-free vaccine were limited, possibly preventing vaccination of pregnant women and children under three who wanted to be immunized.

“Pregnant women were hit especially hard by H1N1 infections and younger children were at high risk, so we wanted to give them vaccine options,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky.

“Suspending the limits made the vaccine more widely available to vulnerable people at a time when supplies were low and production was slow, but that’s no longer the case. There’s plenty of vaccine for everyone, and vaccination is the best protection against H1N1.”

Washington is seeing only low H1N1 activity now, yet flu is still circulating.

The six-month suspension is effective through March 23, 2010 and applied only to H1N1 (swine flu) vaccines. Washington state law limits the amount of mercury that can be in vaccines for pregnant women and children under three. The secretary of health can suspend the law when there’s a shortage of vaccine or during a disease outbreak.

The limits could be suspended again if another vaccine shortage or outbreak develops. The goal is to reduce barriers to health decisions people can make to protect themselves and their families from diseases that can be prevented with vaccine.

Vaccination is the best protection against H1N1 and seasonal flu. Everyone can benefit from flu shots; however, it’s crucial for many people at high risk for complications. Children under 10 need two doses of H1N1 vaccine. Children over 10 need only one dose. There are still many

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children who've not been vaccinated against H1N1 at all. Pregnant women should also make sure they get vaccinated.

The state Department of Health provides information about vaccine and where to find it online. The agency's [H1N1 Web site](http://www.doh.wa.gov/h1n1/default.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/h1n1/default.htm) offers tips on how schools, businesses and people at home can stay healthy as this year's flu season continues. The agency also posts [H1N1 updates on Twitter](http://twitter.com/wa_deptofhealth) (http://twitter.com/wa\_deptofhealth).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <a href="http://www.doh.wa.gov">http://www.doh.wa.gov</a> for a <i>healthy dose of information</i> .
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